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Towards a Normative Philosophical Foundation for Management: Contributions from the Catholic Faith Tradition

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Management in Church and Society: Ambiguities and Controversies

Over the past two decades, an increasing number of initiatives have emerged to enhance management competency in the Catholic Church. Observers have noted some positive outcomes of this trend, such as pastors' improved management skills, greater laity engagement, and restoration of trust and confidence in the Church.¹ However, this ecclesial turn to management has not been without controversy. There remains ambiguity over the notion of management. The term has been associated with a diverse range of topics from team-building and planning to marketing, accounting, and communications. Diverse positions also exist regarding its relation to leadership, governance, and administration. In addition, management is often seen as a panacea for a wide range of ecclesial problems, from dwindling resources to diminishing relevance. Reflecting these ambiguities, the Catholic Church's pastoral management training programs, literature, and other capacity-building activities vary widely in their content, objectives, and approach.² At the same time, a lingering skepticism and suspicion remains with management in the Church. Indeed some scholars have pointed out the various theological and pastoral problems that arise when contemporary management ideas are applied directly and uncritically in ecclesial life. These problems include conflicts with the Church's values, goals, ecclesiology, and view of reality.³

A key reason for such problems is lack of attention to the issue of methodology in inter-disciplinary engagement. Secular management ideas cannot always be applied directly to the Church, and few religious sources are deliberately and directly instructive on church management *per se*. Moreover, any management practice that might be discerned from a particular religious source is not necessarily normative for all contexts since religious sources, including Scripture, are historically-conditioned. Contents which are developed out of different times and situations can even be mutually-contrary especially at the level of pastoral application. A further challenge is that some religious sources, such as the documents of the Second Vatican Council which serve as important reference points for ecclesiology and ministry to-date, are seldom impeccably-synthesized

¹ See Alison Damast, "Mastering the Business of Church," *Bloomberg Business*, January 3, 2008; "Laypeople are Creating a Blueprint for the Church's Success," *U.S. Catholic*, October 2, 2015.

² For example, see "Online M.S. Ecclesial Administration and Management," Catholic University of America (website), accessed October 1, 2021, <https://business.catholic.edu/academics/graduate-programs/meam-program/index.html>; Kevin E. McKenna, ed., *A Concise Guide to Catholic Church Management* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria, 2010); "ChurchEpedia," Leadership Roundtable (website), accessed October 1, 2021, <http://theleadershiproundtable.org/churchepedia/default.asp>.

³ For a detailed discussion, see Christina Kheng, "What Are They Saying About Church Management? Patterns, Problems, and Considerations for Proceeding," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 23, no. 2 (2019): 188–205.

texts. In the endeavor to incorporate diverse positions within a limited time, the promulgated documents are not always perfectly coherent and may even contain contrary positions. Indeed religious teachings are always a work-in-progress amidst the faith community's on-going development. All these features make religious sources susceptible to varied interpretations, and to even being used as proof-texts to justify personal preferences in ecclesial life, including church management.

Within the management field itself, there are corresponding ambiguities and controversies. For instance, on the question of definition, there is a lack of consensus among management scholars on the meaning, scope, and purpose of management.⁴ More seriously, the plausibility of management tools and even the very existence of management have been challenged by critics of the field. Sociologist Keith Grint makes the case that management is a false and arbitrary social construct, rather than an objective and distinct function. This is because the activities commonly associated with a person designated as manager, such as planning and supervision, are also carried out by non-managers in various ways. There is no clear and consistent demarcation of what exactly constitutes management nor where exactly a manager's role begins and ends.⁵ Other scholars similarly assert that management is no more than a myth, conjured to provide a sense of power and control especially in situations of uncertainty.⁶ Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre points out that the causal links between the actions of managers and the outcomes of such actions are largely indeterminate. Hence management expertise "does indeed turn out to be one more moral fiction, because the kind of knowledge which would be required to sustain it does not exist."⁷

Even where the existence of management is not called into question, scholars point out that the implementation of some conventional management tools have resulted in detrimental social consequences and are counter-productive even for the business organization itself. This is because such tools are typically based on reductionist, fragmented, and instrumentalist views of the human person and of human society, the natural environment, and reality as a whole. They also tend to

⁴ See Jeffrey Pfeffer, "Barriers to the Advance of Organizational Science: Paradigm Development as a Dependent Variable," *Academy of Management Review* 18, no. 4 (1993): 599–620.

⁵ Grint's position has been highlighted in Stephen Pattison, *The Faith of the Managers: When Management Becomes Religion* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 1997), 13.

⁶ In particular, see Matthew Stewart, *The Management Myth: Debunking Modern Business Philosophy* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2009), 55-56, 73-80 and Pattison, *Faith of Managers*, 28-34.

⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 74-76, at 75.

assume unrealistic expectations about human knowledge, power, and control.⁸ To redress these shortcomings, positive strides have been made by various movements emerging from within the management field, proposing alternative theories on management and leadership. However, the problem is that these have further exacerbated the plurality and ambiguity that already existed in the field. How is one to decide among all the alternatives? Indeed, management scholars themselves admit the field's prevailing shortcomings to-date, including the need to reconcile dichotomies in values, purposes, audiences, and approaches.⁹

Towards a Common Philosophical Foundation for Management

These challenges highlight the need for a common philosophical foundation to be established so that management can be viewed in appropriate light, whether in Church or society. Bernard Lonergan uses the term “foundations” to refer to the ultimate horizon from which various viewpoints are evaluated and decided upon. Foundations thus pertain to one's underlying worldview and its associated tenets about truth, being, reality, life, and value.¹⁰ In relation to management, foundations provide an underlying premise—the first principles, so to speak—upon which systematic reasoning can be worked out on questions of whether management is myth or reality, what its meaning or significance is, what it comprises, and whether a particular management approach can be regarded as true and good.

Beside addressing questions about the ontology, scope, and principles of management, attention to foundations is also important for another reason. Lonergan highlights that a genuine commitment about one's foundations comes about through the exercise of human conscious intentionality, which includes attentive experience and research, intelligent understanding and interpretation, reasonable judgement and evaluation, and responsible decision.¹¹ Such a deliberate process promotes growth in human authenticity through the right exercise of freedom, discernment, intellect, and responsibility. This helps people avoid adopting ideas from the prevailing culture unthinkingly. More importantly, a conscientious discernment about ultimate horizons and a sustained, committed application of these horizons into concrete management practice enable people to live integrated rather than fragmented lives, thus facilitating the purifying and reconciling of beliefs, values, worldview, and concrete action. On the societal level,

⁸ See Sumantra Ghoshal, “Bad Management Theories Are Destroying Good Management Practices,” *Academy of Management Learning and Education* 4, no. 1 (2005): 75-91.

⁹ See “AOM 2020: Broadening Our Sight,” Academy of Management (website), accessed October 1, 2021, <https://aom.org/events/annual-meeting/past-annual-meetings/2020-broadening-our-sight>.

¹⁰ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), 267-268.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 268.

a collective endeavor to discern, dialogue, and establish common foundations helps build a society's collective wisdom, culture, and social cohesion, thus enabling multiple parties to live and work together more fruitfully. This is especially important given the increasing diversity and need for collaboration in workplaces and communities. Global challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, inequality, conflict, and new disruptive technologies also demand stronger foundations for decision-making based on a common vision of what is real, true, and good.

Currently, a wide variety of philosophical stances underpin management thought, whether consciously or not.¹² Establishing common foundations could begin with identifying the core issues that cut across these stances. To this end, this article highlights five fundamental philosophical questions that lie at the root of various stances and which need to be explicitly confronted especially for management theorizing and practice. It proposes some answers to these questions, drawing from the Catholic faith tradition and highlights the resonances found beyond the Church. Whilst it also acknowledges contrary positions, it points out how the Catholic contribution could help address the foundational problems mentioned above and build a common vision of management that is real, true, and good.

The Question of God

The first core issue underlying many philosophical stances is a question about the ultimate roots of reality. As articulated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), “is the universe governed by chance, blind fate, anonymous necessity, or by a transcendent, intelligent and good Being called ‘God’?”¹³ The answer to this question has pivotal implications for every aspect of human endeavor, including management. Major religious traditions including Christianity hold forth the primacy of a divine being, and the CCC highlights that

God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this,

¹² For a brief survey, see Jean-Etienne Joulle, “The Philosophical Foundations of Management Thought,” *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 15, no. 1 (2016): 157–179.

¹³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2003), para. 284.

when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Saviour. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life (CCC 1).

This concise statement sums up the Catholic worldview, in which the universe has a divine originator who intends goodness for humankind and who pro-actively solicits humans' loving union with God and one another even as opposing tendencies exist within them.

The profound solidarity of God with humankind is especially manifest in the person of Jesus Christ who is God-incarnate in creation and whose own self-giving life, death, and resurrection redeems the world and enlivens it through the Holy Spirit. In this regard, CCC 301 notes that "with creation, God does not abandon God's creatures to themselves. God not only gives them being and existence, but also, and at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to act and brings them to their final end." Catholic doctrine furthermore emphasizes the intimate and pro-active character of divine love, which desires relationship with each person and with all creation. *Deus Caritas Est* (DCE) points out that "on the one hand we find ourselves before a strictly metaphysical image of God: God is the absolute and ultimate source of all being; but this universal principle of creation—the Logos, primordial reason—is at the same time a lover with all the passion of a true love."¹⁴ Yet alongside such perceptibility of the divine, the Church also acknowledges the "infinite distance between God and the things of this world, which do not possess God's fullness."¹⁵ Elaborating on this, *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) points out that "God's word is unpredictable in its power ... [accomplishing] what it wills in ways that surpass our calculations and ways of thinking."¹⁶ Thus, the divine reality is not without an apophatic quality that transcends human understanding.

In the management field, there has been growing interest in religion and spirituality since the mid-1990s.¹⁷ The Management, Spirituality, and Religion interest group was formally established in the Academy of Management in the early-2000s. Studies of religion in management have also evolved beyond just considering how employees' and customers' religiosity might impact the bottomline. Instead, divine realities are increasingly considered explicitly, and

¹⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2005), para. 10.

¹⁵ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2015), para. 88.

¹⁶ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2013), para. 22.

¹⁷ See Margaret Benefiel, "Irreconcilable Foes? The Discourse of Spirituality and the Discourse of Organizational Science," *Organization* 10, no. 2 (May 2003): 383-391.

notions of spirituality are no longer confined to the psycho-emotional plane. For instance in a recent survey, Judi Neal notes management research and practices that are cognizant of “transcendence”, “something larger than self”, the “mystical” and “sacred”.¹⁸ Other scholars highlight that explicit discourse on the divine now occurs not only in its traditional space of business ethics but increasingly in relation to broader ontological and epistemological issues, thus impacting key management tasks such as goal-setting, decision-making, and resource management.¹⁹

These trends highlight the growing possibility for divine realities to find a normative place in the philosophical foundations for management. Several scholars have even pointed out the potential benefits. For instance Stephen Pattison observes that religion opens one up to the realm of transcendence and mystery, and helps to balance the excessive anthropocentric, mechanistic, and positivist tendencies in management science.²⁰ Similarly, Kent Miller notes that a faith-based hermeneutic widens the horizon of management researchers, thus facilitating more innovative theories that can address problems which secularist paradigms are unable to, especially in the area of corporate ethics.²¹ For the time being, however, secularist paradigms remain dominant. Ironically, Catholic pastoral resource materials which import ideas directly from management science show a corresponding lack of the spiritual perspective. In such pastoral materials, the focus tends to be on the corporeal and material, such as empirical growth, performance indicators, and human psycho-social dynamics in group decisions. The proffered management methods also reflect over-optimism about human agency and the efficacy of technique.²²

In his discussion of normative philosophical foundations, Lonergan highlights the centrality of the religious horizon. He notes that “the question of God ... lies within man’s horizon” because “implicitly we grant that the universe is intelligible and, once that is granted, there arises the question whether the universe could be intelligible without having an intelligent ground. But that is the

¹⁸ Judi Neal, “Overview of Workplace Spirituality Research,” in Satinder Dhiman, ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Fulfillment* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2018), 18.

¹⁹ See Marian Eabrasu, “Gods Are Still in Business – Introduction to the Symposium: God and Management,” *Philosophy of Management* 18, no. 3 (Nov 2019): 293–302.

²⁰ Pattison, *Faith of Managers*, 166.

²¹ Kent D. Miller, “Organizational Research as Practical Theology,” *Organizational Research Methods* 18, no. 2 (2015): 276–299.

²² Examples of such tendencies in the pastoral resource materials, as well as others highlighted in this essay, are noted in Kheng, “What are They Saying About Church Management.”

question about God.”²³ Various other scholars have similarly noted humankind’s innate wondering and interior awareness of a divine and ultimate source of life, order, goodness, and beauty, especially through personal and gratuitous experiences of mystery, fullness, unconditional love, and profound yearning.²⁴ In fact, if probed more deeply, it might be said that the very existence of management theory and practice is not totally unrelated to humans’ native and unrestricted inclination towards order, progress, and wholeness, which in turn points towards an ultimate, originating Ground of order and goodness, or what Lonergan describes as “the question of God.”²⁵

A philosophical foundation for management that incorporates the principle of divine primacy, particularly as elaborated in the Catholic tradition, would have significant implications. Firstly, the goals of management would have a compass to be guided by, in the form of the divine purpose which is the fruitful flourishing of all creation in divine eternal union. What this means concretely is explored in the section below on universal flourishing. Secondly, the methods of management would take account of the active and indwelling presence of God in human persons and promote the divine way especially in its moral and social dimensions. Such methods would involve, among other things, right relationships, mutuality, collaboration, authenticity, openness, and a sincere discernment of truth and right action. Thirdly, the apophatic nature of divine mystery calls for an approach to management that is less presumptuous about human knowledge, agency, and control. The current emphasis in management science on technique, measurability, and outcomes would be moderated towards a more tentative, open, flexible, and realistic approach. Finally the gratuitous fidelity of divine salvation implies that despite human failings and other setbacks, the task of management can still be pursued with an enduring a stance of hope, provided it is premised upon the principles as discussed above. All these reorientations thus help to address some of the current weaknesses of the management field.

The Nature and Purpose of Human Life

Another core philosophical issue involves questions about human existence. As expressed in *Gaudium et Spes* (GS) “what is the human person? What can humans offer to society, what can they expect from it? ... What is the meaning and value of this feverish activity?”²⁶ These questions have decisive implications for

²³ Lonergan, *Method*, 103, 101.

²⁴ Some examples are highlighted in Charles Taylor, “Conversions,” in *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap, Harvard University Press, 2007), 728-730.

²⁵ Op. Cit., 103.

²⁶ Vatican II Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1965), para. 10, 33.

management. From the perspective of the Catholic tradition, human persons are created by God to partake in the divine life and share a profound dignity and equality rooted in the divine love. The CCC highlights that “God is the sovereign master of his plan. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures’ co-operation ... For God grants his creatures not only their existence, but also the dignity of acting on their own, of being causes and principles for each other, and thus of co-operating in the accomplishment of his plan” (para. 306). Thus the meaning of human life is found not only in loving union with God but also in fruitful participation in the divine project of the world’s full flourishing. In fact, both are two sides of the same coin.

On human work and human subjectivity in particular, *Laborem Exercens* (LE) highlights that “work is one of the characteristics that distinguish humans from the rest of creatures ... as the ‘image of God’ the human being is a person, that is to say, a subjective being capable of acting in a planned and rational way, capable of deciding about himself or herself, and with a tendency to self-realization.”²⁷ The active presence of God in human persons does not negate human freedom, which is itself a divine gift of love. However, one consequence is that humans are “divided interiorly” as a result of serving “the creature rather than the creator”, and are “drawn towards what is wrong and are sunk in many evils” (GS 13). The Church notes that human intellect and ability are also limited, and although many achievements in history are “products of people’s intelligence and creativity”, these advances also “recoil upon them, upon their judgements and desires” (GS 4). In addition, human conscience can err from “ignorance which it is unable to avoid” (GS 16). At the societal level, all these shortcomings take on a systemic proportion. Hence “the consequences of sin perpetuate the structures of sin, ... conditioning human conduct ... and interfere also in the process of the development of peoples.”²⁸ Nevertheless, Catholic doctrine points out humans’ innate capacity for transcendence, acknowledging that “they are open above all to the infinite—God—because with their intellect and will they raise themselves above all the created order and above themselves ... and tend towards total truth and the absolute good, ... to the fullness of being” (CSD 130). The Church thus exhorts human persons to exercise their gifts of intellect, wisdom, and discernment to “help humanity to reach a higher understanding of truth, goodness, and beauty, to make judgments of universal value” through “penetrating to the deepest nature of things” and to “search for higher values” (GS 57). Ultimately, since the central

²⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1981), Preface and para. 6.

²⁸ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Washington DC: USCCB Publishing, 2005), para. 130.

characteristic of God is love, the human vocation finds its apex in kenotic self-giving love for others, made possible by God's grace.

A particular feature of Catholic anthropology that is significant for management is its emphasis on the inner self or interiority of human beings. GS 14 calls attention to "the deep recesses of their being, where God who probes the heart awaits them, and where they themselves decide their own destiny in the sight of God." Human interiority is thus a locus of the divine-human relationship as well as the seat of human conscience and intentionality. Implicit in this teaching is a view of the human person as multidimensional in nature, whose physical, mental, psycho-emotional, and spiritual faculties are all dynamically inter-related. One corollary is that human knowing and decision-making involve more than just intellectual reasoning. The Church points out that there is "a form of knowledge ... of a different order than objective knowledge which proceeds by way of conceptualisation and reasoning. It is a knowledge by empathy, or a knowledge of the heart."²⁹ In fact, when it comes to the most profound truths, authenticity of insight is often attested to by its engendering of a deeply life-giving movement in the human heart, in "the deep recesses of their being" (GS 14).

Alongside this emphasis on the inner self, the Church also stresses the innate social nature of human beings. GS 12 notes that "God did not create human persons as solitary beings" but "by their innermost nature men and women are social beings; and if they do not enter into relationships with others, they can neither live nor develop their gifts." *Fratelli Tutti* (FT) highlights "the human family's innate vocation to fraternity" (FT 26) and even asserts that "each of us is fully a person when we are part of a people" (FT 182). Human persons are thus created and called as a community, and human work is communal and collaborative in its very ontology. In this regard, the Church affirms the diverse charisms of different persons and groups, and advocates "the advantages of unity with fruitful diversity" (GS 75) when they work in synergy.

These views contrast with the implicit anthropology of philosophical stances such as materialism and naturalism which tend to co-identify human persons with their corporeality. They also contrast with the viewpoints of historicists and nihilists in their denial of a higher purpose and meaning to human life. In addition, socio-political systems such as totalitarianism and neo-liberal individualism both suppress authentic human subjectivity as well as self-transcendence, and social responsibility. These are thus contrary to the Catholic view. Within the management field, the embedded anthropology of certain approaches such as scientific management identifies the human person as *Homo Economicus* (Economic Man)—predictable, self-interested, and materialistic. Many

²⁹ International Theological Commission, *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2014), para. 50.

approaches to performance management as well as the resource-based view of organizations also reinforce a transactional and instrumental view of human persons and human work. Critics have pointed out that these anthropologies are ultimately reductionist and unrealistic, resulting in management practices that are excessively controlling, manipulative, and destructive to the genuine dignity and meaningfulness of human work. Such tendencies are sometimes echoed in Catholic pastoral resource materials that apply mainstream management ideas directly, resulting in the instrumental treatment of people as resources.³⁰

Catholic anthropology can help redress some of these weaknesses in the management field and is not without resonance outside the Church. For instance, the view of the human person as having a purpose that is meaningful and larger than oneself is gaining traction on many fronts. Management scholarship is increasingly cognizant that both employees and leaders seek not only self-interest and material gain but also meaningfulness of work, fulfilment of potential, positive relationships, and contribution to society. The multidimensional nature of human persons, especially with regard to their affectivity and relationality, is also well-emphasized in management theories on worker motivation, emotional intelligence, workplace relations, and organizational culture. In addition, it can be said that the Church's assertion of the innate social nature of human persons is echoed in the management field's growing emphasis on teamwork, networking, and collaboration. In fact, these lines of thinking trace their roots back to the human relations school of thought which emerged in the management field as far back as the early-20th Century.

More recently, specialized movements such as Critical Management Studies resonate even more with the Church's perspective, stressing the principles of human dignity, equality, and authentic subjectivity.³¹ On another front, contemporary leadership scholars echo the Church's emphasis on personal authentic subjectivity, advocating the need to integrate personal values, work, and beliefs, such as by searching one's heart to discover one's life purpose and aligning one's career accordingly.³² Others have spoken out against the blind following of management technique and stressed the need for critical reflexivity, discernment,

³⁰ See note 3.

³¹ See Mats Alvesson, Todd Bridgman and Hugh Willmott (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Management Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

³² For example, see Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Leading with Soul* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011); Bill George, *True North: Discover Your Authentic Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007).

and wisdom.³³ Raffaella Sadun *et al* note the prevalence of self-interest and other negative human tendencies which prevent management theories from being implemented properly and bearing fruit, thus highlighting the problem of evil.³⁴ Some scholars have also advocated management epistemologies that include contemplation and other more interior, intuitive ways of knowing.³⁵ All these pave the way for a more holistic anthropology that is resonant with Catholic teaching and that can strengthen the philosophical foundations of management.

The Nature of the Cosmos

A third major set of philosophical questions pertains to the nature of the cosmos. How are we to regard the physical world? Does reality encompass something more? On this subject, Catholic doctrine highlights the dignity, integrity, and sacredness of all creation, which stem once again from the divine primacy. LS 26 points out that

...in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the word “creation” has a broader meaning than “nature”, for it has to do with God’s loving plan in which every creature has its own value and significance. Nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled, whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion.

LS 88 further highlights that “the Spirit of life dwells in every living creature and calls us to enter into relationship with God.” Thus from this perspective, all of creation is mystagogical.

In addition, there is an intrinsic order and inter-connectedness in the whole cosmos. LS 221 points out that “God created the world, writing into it an order and a dynamism that human beings have no right to ignore.” Human activity must thus “take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an

³³ See Henry Mintzberg, *Managers Not MBAs: A Hard Look at the Soft Practice of Managing and Management Development* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005); Warren G. Bennis and James O’Toole, “How Business Schools Lost Their Way,” *Harvard Business Review* 83, no. 5 (May 2005): 96-104.

³⁴ Raffaella Sadun, Nicholas Bloom, and John Van Reenen, “Why Do We Undervalue Competent Management?” *Harvard Business Review* 95, no. 5 (Sept–Oct 2017): 120–127.

³⁵ For example, see Peter Case, Robert French and Peter Simpson, “From *Theoria* to Theory: Leadership Without Contemplation,” *Organization* 19, no. 3 (2012): 345-361; and C. Otto Scharmer, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2016).

ordered system and proceed in line with God's original gift of all that is" (LS 5). This calls for an integral ecology which respects and positively develops the "interrelation between ecosystems and between the various spheres of social interaction" (LS 141). As implied by the latter point, the ecological wellness of the cosmos includes promoting the integrity and harmony of diverse social groups. CSD 151 elaborates that "the social nature of human beings is not uniform but is expressed in many different ways," and "the common good depends on a healthy social pluralism ... within which it is possible for each element to preserve and develop its own characteristics and autonomy." Likewise, LS 144 stresses that the development of peoples must be cognizant of and respect "their proper culture".

Congruent with this teaching, the Church emphasizes that the cosmos is not just physical matter but a multidimensional reality which encompasses both material and meaning, physical and metaphysical. As LS 199 asserts, "it cannot be maintained that empirical science provides a complete explanation of life, the interplay of all creatures and the whole of reality"; rather, a more complete epistemology includes "aesthetic sensibility ... [and] reason's ability to grasp the ultimate meaning and purpose of things." Likewise, GS 15 notes that "steeped in wisdom, humans pass through visible realities to those which are unseen." In connection with this, the Catholic tradition emphasizes the existence of absolute truths. As pointed out in *Caritas in Veritate* (CV), "truth is not something that we produce, it is always found, or better, received. Truth, like love, is neither planned nor willed, but somehow imposes itself upon human beings."³⁶

Concomitantly, the Church affirms human's ability to attain towards such truths especially through reasoned discernment enlightened by faith, with the aid of divine grace acting on imperfect nature. As GS 15 notes, human beings can "with genuine certainty" penetrate and recognize enduring truths, though not without limitations. The appropriation of truth is necessarily a developmental process requiring sincerity in seeking, openness in dialogue, and rigor in discernment. Highlighting these criteria for arriving at truth, FT 211 elaborates that

...in a pluralistic society, dialogue is the best way to realize what ought always to be affirmed and respected apart from any ephemeral consensus. Such dialogue needs to be enriched and illumined by clear thinking, rational arguments, a variety of perspectives and the contribution of different fields of knowledge and points of view. Nor can it exclude the conviction that it is possible to arrive at certain fundamental truths always to be upheld. Acknowledging the

³⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2009), par. 34.

existence of certain enduring values, however demanding it may be to discern them, makes for a robust and solid social ethics.

These views contrast with the philosophical stances that undergird many management theories, including the stances of empiricism, materialism, nominalism, and relativism. They also contrast with the exploitative, technocratic, and self-serving tendencies which business management practices are often associated with, though this is now mitigated by a growing socio-ecological consciousness. Nevertheless some of these tendencies seemed to have influenced Catholic pastoral resource materials, in which there can be found pastoral advice that over-emphasize measurable targets, competition, and a corporate organizational view of the Church.³⁷ Catholic teachings on the cosmos also contrast with some orthodox religious views which deny any potential contribution of the secular sciences.³⁸ The more dialogical stance of the Catholic tradition towards the created world paves the way for engagement with the secular disciplines, including management science.³⁹

Catholic teaching on the cosmos is not without resonance outside the Church. For instance, several major schools of thought in philosophy resonate with the Church's view of reality and truth. These include not only classical traditions but also more recent movements such as critical realism which is now increasingly applied to organization and management studies.⁴⁰ Moreover, the Church's view of reality as encompassing more than the physical to include meaning, values, and the spiritual is borne out not only by these philosophical theories but also by human experience. As CV 77 notes, "everyone experiences the many immaterial and spiritual dimensions of life. Knowing is not simply a material act, since the object that is known always conceals something beyond the empirical datum." Additionally, the Church's position on absolute truths is echoed by some

³⁷ See note 3.

³⁸ John Milbank has been a prominent proponent of this view. With regard to management, see John Milbank, "Stale Expressions: The Management-Shaped Church," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 21, no. 1 (April 2008): 117-128.

³⁹ See especially Vatican II Council, *Lumen Gentium* (LG) (1964) which acknowledges that "many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside [the Catholic Church's] visible confines" (LG 8), and GS which hails the "methodical research in all branches of knowledge" (GS 36) and recognizes the Church's gain from "progress of the sciences" (GS 44).

⁴⁰ See Stephen Ackroyd and Steve Fleetwood, eds., *Realist Perspectives on Management and Organisations* (London: Routledge, 2000).

contemporary scholars who are reasserting this view amidst the present culture of distortion and relativization of truth.⁴¹

In mainstream management literature, a systems thinking approach has gained traction since the latter half of the 20th Century. This approach resonates with the Church's view of the inter-connectedness of all creation. Likewise there has been increased emphasis on a triple bottomline of profit, people, and planet as well as on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria for investments. In addition, some management scholars have been calling for a common paradigm and meta-theory of management, decrying the current fragmentation and excessive divergence in the field.⁴² Such calls indicate an implicit conviction about the existence of universal, objective principles and the possibility of attaining towards them. Others have similarly made the case for the existence of universal values and the need for their dialogical discernment.⁴³ The management field's traditional emphasis on the empirical and measurable has also been called out as a problem to be redressed.⁴⁴

A strong case can be made for bringing Catholic cosmology to bear on the philosophical foundations of management. At a fundamental level, the Catholic view of reality as constituting more than the empirical and including the realm of meaning enables the very notion of management to be affirmed as real. This counters the nominalist challenge that there exist only specific tasks performed by various people and that management as a function *per se* does not exist.⁴⁵ In light of the Catholic faith tradition, management can be regarded as the coordination of human work amidst diverse roles and charisms. Moreover, the affirmation of systemic order and inter-relations in the cosmos, and the need to uphold the integrity of the whole, underscore the importance of management as a function that helps achieve this end. At the same time, they require that management practices respect the inherent dignity and intrinsic character of each and all creation, including cultures and contexts, and promote integral ecological development. Management theories and tools must also focus not only on measurable or observable factors but take greater account of the whole of reality, including human

⁴¹ For example, see Matthew d'Ancona, *Post-truth: The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back* (London: Ebury Press, 2017).

⁴² See note 4.

⁴³ For example, see Geert Demuijnck, "Universal Values and Virtues in Management Versus Cross-Cultural Moral Relativism: An Educational Strategy to Clear the Ground for Business Ethics," *Journal of Business Ethics* 128, no. 4 (2015): 817–835.

⁴⁴ See note 8.

⁴⁵ See note 5.

affectivity, relationships, meaning, values, spirituality, and socio-cultural and political dynamics. This renders management more effective in real life.

Manifestations of Universal Flourishing

Another significant aspect of the philosophical foundations for management is teleology. The key question in this regard is whether the goals and methods of management—and indeed, of all human activity—should be aligned to an ultimate good that has some normative quality. If so, what exactly does this ultimate good comprise? From the Catholic faith perspective, fullness of flourishing is multidimensional in nature, comprising the “personal and social, spiritual and corporeal, historical and transcendent” (CSD 38). Human well-being includes “people’s material needs and the requirements of their intellectual, moral, spiritual, and religious life” (GS 64). At the societal level, the “common good” is “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily” (GS 26).

Catholic doctrine further elaborates on each of these dimensions of universal flourishing. For instance, it highlights that physical well-being encompasses basic material necessities such as food, clothing, health, shelter, and safety for all.⁴⁶ The Church also stresses the universal destination of the earth’s resources, emphasizing that “God destined the earth and all it contains for all people and nations” (GS 69). At the same time, it advocates an integral ecology that respects the integrity, dignity, and inter-relatedness of all creation. In the social dimension, the Catholic tradition emphasizes that the human good includes meaningful bonds in family and community, as well as solidarity, collaboration, and mutual care, with special attention to the most vulnerable.⁴⁷ These good ends are to be manifested not only through inter-personal interactions but also at the level of social structures, including “that complex of institutions that give structure to the life of society, juridically, civilly, politically and culturally” (CV 7). This has important implications for management. In the Church’s view, this “institutional path” is “no less excellent and effective than the kind of charity which encounters the neighbour directly” (CV 7) and requires a proper “ordering of human society” (GS 39). In addition, Catholic doctrine emphasizes the principles of participation and subsidiarity. Social institutions should enable “the largest possible number” of people to participate as far as possible (GS 31) and do not displace but facilitate the autonomy, growth, and responsibility of each person and group. In this regard, it is significant to note that the Church’s teachings concurrently call for ensuring a

⁴⁶ For instance, see GS 26.

⁴⁷ See especially GS 23-32.

“necessary executive unity” (GS 68) amidst such participation, and recognizes the role of “management” (GS 68) to this end.

Along with the physical and social, Catholic doctrine highlights the cultural dimension in creation’s flourishing. It acknowledges that “true and full humanity” requires cultural development, which encompasses the arts and sciences, spiritual traditions, “styles of living and scales of values”, as well as “each people’s native characteristics” and “traditional wisdom” (GS 53, 56). Proper cultural development “humanizes social life” (GS 53) and can “help humanity to reach a higher understanding of truth, goodness, and beauty, to make judgments of universal value” (GS 57). Thus countering a solely economic view of development, the Church stresses that “an historic, artistic and cultural patrimony ... is a part of the shared identity of each place and a foundation upon which to build a habitable city” (LS 143). Hence, “protecting the cultural treasures of humanity in the broadest sense” (LS 143) and promoting cultural development towards truth, goodness, and beauty are integral to the flourishing of the world.

Closely related to cultural development is the promotion of personal authentic subjectivity. This pertains to the intellectual, psychological, and moral development of each human person. Catholic teaching consistently emphasizes that the promotion of human freedom, intentionality, interiority, responsibility, and self-actualization is integral to the human good and accords with the dignity of humans. CSD 134 particularly highlights the need for each person “to develop those moral attitudes that are fundamental for any society that truly wishes to be human (justice, honesty, truthfulness, etc.), and which in no way can simply be expected of others or delegated to institutions”. In addition, the Church holds that growing in authentic personal subjectivity includes cultivating “the faculties of wonder, of understanding, of contemplation, of forming personal judgments” (GS 59). With regard to management in particular, FT 162 stresses the need “to provide everyone with the opportunity to nurture the seeds that God has planted in each of us: our talents, our initiative and our innate resources.” Moreover LS 128 points out that “the goal should not be that technological progress increasingly replace human work, for this would be detrimental to humanity. Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfilment.” These teachings have significant relevance for management.

Finally, Catholic doctrine points out the importance of the spiritual dimension in creation’s flourishing. As CCC 294 highlights, “the ultimate purpose of creation is that God who is the creator of all things may at last become ‘all in all’ (1 Cor 15:28), thus simultaneously assuring God’s own glory and our beatitude.” Genuine human happiness and wholeness is incomplete without union with God, since “the desire for God is written in the human heart; ... only in God will (humans) find the truth and happiness they never stop searching for” (CCC 27). Consequently, the Church stresses that “development must include not just material

growth but also spiritual growth, since the human person is a unity of body and soul born of God's creative love and destined for eternal life" (CV 76). At the same time, human failings and limitations are addressed ultimately by openness and collaboration with the gratuitous grace of God. It is this divine grace that enables the universe to reach its teleological end.

A noteworthy point in Catholic teleology is that even as the Church highlights the importance of each of the above dimensions, it also stresses a hierarchical ordering among them such that the more material and temporal goods are ultimately at the service of the moral and spiritual goods. For instance, GS 57 points out that the final aim of cultural development should be that "the human spirit, freed from the bondage of material things, can be more easily drawn to the worship and contemplation of the Creator." Likewise, GS 35 stresses that "when people work ... they also perfect themselves. They learn, develop their faculties, emerging from and transcending themselves," and that "this is more precious than any kind of wealth that can be amassed." Overall, in its comprehensive and holistic account of universal flourishing, the Catholic faith tradition makes a substantial contribution towards a compass for management goals and decision-making. Compared with models of ethics that are typically discussed in business management classes, the Church's more comprehensive and instructive teleological account can enable management goals and methods to be reoriented according to a normative scale of values. It can foster not only the common good but also more sustainable and authentic progress in society.

Many aspects of Catholic teleology are not without resonance outside the Church. For instance, social scientists such as Abraham Maslow have identified a similar hierarchy of needs.⁴⁸ Business ethics networks have also adopted common values such as human dignity, holistic well-being, participation, co-operation, and the common good, in resonance with the Catholic view.⁴⁹ More significantly, on the question of whether teleology should even be considered in management in the first place, there is increasing recognition in the field that the common social good should be a normative and ultimate goal of management. For instance at the global level, the United Nations promotes "Principles for Responsible Management Education" that include sustainability, inclusiveness, and social and environmental goals.⁵⁰ Similar desired ends are found in the United Nations Global Compact for

⁴⁸ An example of Maslow's framework applied to management can be found in Helen J. Alford and Michael J. Naughton, *Managing as if Faith Mattered* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 43.

⁴⁹ For example, see Humanistic Management Network (website), accessed October 1, 2021, <https://humanisticmanagement.network/about-us/>.

⁵⁰ United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education (website), accessed October 1, 2021, <https://www.unprme.org/what-we-do>.

business.⁵¹ These global conventions not only resonate with the Church's teleological vision but also attest to humankind's innate orientation towards common universal values.

Nevertheless, Catholic teleology is not without disagreement outside and within the Church. It is contrasted by the philosophical stances of atheists, materialists, historicists, and nihilists. It also contrasts with certain norms that still prevail in management practice. Despite progress made towards ethics and socio-ecological responsibility, scholars note that maximizing shareholder wealth still dominates the goals and methods implicit in many management tools today.⁵² Moreover, the conditions to achieve shareholder wealth, such as improved productivity, efficiency, market share, and customer service have in turn become desired ends in themselves.⁵³ Such tendencies are sometimes manifested in Catholic pastoral resource materials that adopt secular management directly, such as in pastoral advice that advocate treating church members as customers and making pastoral management decisions based on what these "customers" desire rather than on the Church's scale of values.⁵⁴ Internally, there is a lack of common vision observed at times in the Church regarding priorities and goals. For instance, there are those who emphasize the spiritual and eschatological dimensions of salvation, to the point of marginalizing the material and temporal. Consequently, pastoral work is confined to the realm of 'purely spiritual matters'. Conversely, there are those who emphasize the social and material dimensions to such an extent that the Church's mission is co-identified with a social justice agenda. Overall, there is a need to promote a wider appreciation of the holistic teleological vision of the Church as well-articulated in official Catholic teaching.

The Nature of History

A final component of the philosophical foundations for management pertains to the nature of history. This addresses questions about whether there is any normative account for the course of history, why and how things happen, the extent of human beings' mastery over events, and the problem of suffering and evil. On these issues, the Catholic faith tradition is of the view that "the universe was created in a state

⁵¹ United Nations Global Compact (website), accessed October 1, 2021, <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/mission/principles>.

⁵² See Denise Baden and Malcolm Higgs, "Challenging the Perceived Wisdom of Management Theories and Practice," *Academy of Management Learning and Education* 14, no. 4 (December 2015): 536-552.

⁵³ This has been particularly highlighted in Michael L. Budde, "The Rational Shepherd: Corporate Practices and the Church," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 21, no. 1 (2008): 96-116.

⁵⁴ See note 3.

of journeying toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained” (CCC 302) and which would reach “full flower” (GS 39) only at the end of time. Meanwhile, creation undergoes an “earthly pilgrimage” (GS 45) where “in God’s plan this process of becoming involves the appearance of certain beings and the disappearance of others, the existence of the more perfect alongside the less perfect, both constructive and destructive forces of nature” (CCC 310). Creation’s history is thus marked by change and the rise of both good and evil. In the Church’s view, these tensions will be fully resolved only at the end of time and with divine grace. For this reason, the Church calls out “the error and deception of purely immanentistic visions of the meaning of history and in humanity’s claims to self-salvation” (CSD 38). Human life and activity are thus more rightfully viewed within a horizon that includes both the historical and eschatological, and that acknowledges human limitations and vulnerabilities.

Ultimately, the Catholic stance is one of hope founded upon God’s love already present in earthly history and transforming it, especially as manifested in the paschal victory of Christ. However, this does not displace the human vocation but in fact gives it impetus and optimism. As GS 39 stresses, “the expectation of a new earth must not weaken but rather stimulate our concern for cultivating this one.” Likewise, LE 27 affirms that whenever the inevitable “sweat and toil” of human work is accepted in fidelity to one’s vocation, it becomes a sharing in Christ’s paschal mystery and leads to the world’s redemption “precisely through the toil that goes with work.” Human labor even has a lasting significance beyond the temporal horizon because “the fruits of our nature and our enterprise” will be found again, transfigured, in “the kingdom eternal and universal” (GS 39). Meanwhile temporal life is one that involves on-going change, transformation, and renewal.

These teachings of the Church imply that management theorizing and practice should proceed with less determinism and more humility, flexibility, openness, and tentativeness, with realistic expectations about outcomes and success. At the same time, the Church’s message of hope founded upon the divine promise provides the grounds for perseverance, patience, and courage amidst challenges in management. These views find resonance with several voices outside the Church, including scholars in the management field who are appealing for a more realistic, probabilistic, and less deterministic approach to management. Phil Rosenzweig observes that popular management thought tends to “give rise to the especially grievous notion that business success follows predictably from implementing a few key steps” and obscure a “basic truth” that success is often “shaped in part by factors outside our control.”⁵⁵ Likewise, Sumantra Ghoshal

⁵⁵ Phil Rosenzweig, “The Halo Effect and Other Managerial Delusions,” *The McKinsey Quarterly*, Issue 1, February 2007, accessed October 1, 2021, <http://www.mckinsey.com/business->

points out that whilst causal and functional perspectives can be adopted in the physical and natural sciences respectively, theories in the human and social sciences deal with the “intentional”; hence they cannot be deterministic because human intentions can never be fully predicted, calculated, or controlled.⁵⁶ Similarly, Shane Snow calls for more “intellectual humility” and openness in management theorizing and practice.⁵⁷

Apart from these resonances however, the Catholic viewpoint still remains in conflict with much of mainstream management science, which espouses a more Pelagian and over-confident stance about humankind’s mastery over history, now further bolstered by advances in technological capabilities. Popular management literature, in particular, tends to dispense advice in the form of a few simplified steps which promise the desired results, even for strategies in coping with unpredictability and disruption. Some Catholic pastoral resource materials show a similar presumption about control and success, placing much emphasis on the acquisition and application of management techniques and echoing the business language of “excellence” without cautiously examining its underlying worldview.⁵⁸ These materials could be improved by adopting a more nuanced and developmental stance. Just as important, the pilgrim nature of the Church also entails a developmental approach in the understanding, articulation, and reception of religious faith. Hence even as the Church’s existing wealth of teachings can contribute positively to management foundations, it also needs to listen to other viewpoints in a spirit of discernment. In this way, greater possibilities are opened up to articulate a foundation for management that is well-developed and has universal appeal. Indeed, a philosophical foundation is always a work-in-progress since truth and value are appropriated only through an on-going, genuine, and dialogical search.

Redefining Management in Church and Society: Meaning, Scope, and Reorienting Principles

Based on the above philosophical tenets, some fundamental questions about management in Church and society as noted in the beginning of this essay can now be addressed. On the question of whether management truly exists as a distinct

functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/the-halo-effect-and-other-managerial-delusions.

⁵⁶ Ghoshal, “Bad Management Theories,” 77-78.

⁵⁷ Shane Snow, “A New Way to Become More Open-Minded,” *Harvard Business Review*, November 20, 2018, accessed October 1, 2021, <https://hbr.org/2018/11/a-new-way-to-become-more-open-minded>.

⁵⁸ See note 3.

reality, the Catholic view of reality as encompassing more than the empirical and nominal implies that management as a composite function can indeed be regarded as real and distinct. Moreover, the Church's view of the human vocation as a participation in the divine ordering of the world, along with the Catholic emphasis on human freedom, intentionality, and responsibility in such participation, affirms the place of management in human activity as well as its meaningfulness. Based on these tenets, management can be defined as humans' responsible and collaborative ordering of the inter-related elements of the cosmos, in communion with the divine activity towards universal flourishing in all its dimensions. At the same time, management is not merely a means in achieving universal flourishing. Rather, the teleological goal of humanity is to be actualized in the very exercise of management, especially in the form of human beings' responsibility, communion, participation, ingenuity, and authentic subjectivity. What this implies is that the methods of management warrant as much attention as its goals when it comes to ensuring what is true and good. In this light, management is no less a path to holiness, a human activity that possesses a sacramental character, manifesting the divine ordering of the world. This perspective of management not only affirms its distinctness and necessity but even elevates its meaning and theological significance.

On the scope of management, it was earlier noted that there has been a lack of consistency in the constituent tasks of management. Now it can be proposed that in light of the philosophical tenets discussed above, a foremost task in management pertains to the mission of an organization, be it an ecclesial community or a business enterprise. Since every entity has a particular role in the divine purpose, each organization would need to discern its specific mission, and to give it concrete expression through relevant activities. There also needs to be regular evaluation and re-discernment amidst changing contexts in view of the dynamic nature of history. A second major task of management would be the establishment of effective systems and structures, since universal flourishing entails proper ordering. This would include institutions, processes, regulations, and roles at the organizational, communal, societal, and global levels. A third major task would be stewardship of all the gifts of creation. In line with the multidimensional nature of the cosmos, such gifts would encompass not only natural and physical resources but also all forms of a society's cultural, traditional, scientific, and aesthetic wealth, and most of all, the gift of each human person. The vision of universal flourishing as offered by the Catholic tradition implies that stewardship would entail identifying, cultivating, caring for, and bringing together all these gifts in a way that promotes their fruitful transformation and development, as well as the common good. Finally, a fourth major task of management would be the fostering of communion, which is essential to the nature and vocation of human persons and integral to universal flourishing. Management thus includes identifying, animating, strengthening, and

widening circles of communion such that a diversity of persons and groups are able to forge meaningful relationships of collaboration, co-responsibility, and solidarity.

In addition to the meaning and scope of management, the philosophical tenets also elucidate normative principles that should undergird the practice of management. For instance, one key principle would be that both means and ends in management should be consonant with the vision of fullness for all creation, with its hierarchical order of the physical, social, cultural, moral-psychological, and spiritual good. Management goals or methods that contradict these values, such as those which disregard the integrity and intrinsic order of creation, violate human dignity, freedom, and authentic subjectivity, or do not promote collaboration and community, should be reoriented accordingly. Likewise organizational missions should be resonant with the holistic vision of universal flourishing. Another key principle is that in line with the Catholic view of the cosmos, management epistemology should be more multidimensional, attending to not only empirical data but the whole of reality, including the complex world of meaning and values. It should engage the whole human person, including human interiority and affectivity, and be mindful of particular cultures and contexts while respecting the inter-connectedness of the whole. This would contrast with the empirical, mechanistic, and fragmented tendency of mainstream management science. A related principle is that the approach to management theory and practice should be more probabilistic, tentative, open, dialogical, flexible, and realistic about outcomes, in line with the limitations of human knowledge, good will, and control. Finally, the methods of management should facilitate human co-operation with divine activity in the cosmos by promoting discernment, depth of reflection, and growth in spirituality.

Conclusion

Whilst much scholarship has already been done in bringing Catholic doctrine to bear on management, these have largely focused on making business practices more ethical. They have also tended to veer away from incorporating the divine reality more explicitly in management practice. In contrast, this article has addressed management at a more foundational and philosophical level, bringing to bear Catholic doctrine on fundamental issues such as divine primacy, creation, revelation, and epistemology. It has proposed a normative philosophical base for management, pointing out that this has been a lacuna in the field. As noted, many of the Catholic philosophical precepts for management, including divine primacy, resonate with viewpoints outside the Church. What is significant is that these precepts are not piecemeal or disparate stances but form a coherent and integrated whole. Thus the Catholic tradition is able to provide a comprehensive and systematic account of reality, human activity, and management. A normative philosophical foundation implies that there should be no dichotomy between

management principles in Church and society. Rather, such a foundation serves as a common base of the real, true, and good, from which specific management practices can be formulated for particular contexts. Given the critical challenges faced by the world today, it is hoped that this way of proceeding can facilitate better paths for the road ahead.